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Tuesday's Budget Hearing Reveals HHS Secretary Alex Azar's Incompetence

Alex Azar Admitted That His Deputies—Who He Still Employs—Never Elevated Concerns Of Career Staff Members About The Detriments Of Family Separation

Alex Azar Admitted That His Deputies— Scott Lloyd And Maggie Wynne Did Not Raise Commander White's Concerns About Separating Children To Him And That There Were No Consequence For Them. SCHAKOWSKY: Were you aware that ORR was seeing a tenfold increase of children separated from their parents? AZAR: I was not SCHAKOWSKY: The leaders who told [Commander white] not to prepare for continued increase in separated children were Scott Lloyd...and Maggie Wynne...did Mr. Lloyd or Ms. Wynne ever discuss family separation with you? AZAR: Not to my knowledge and I am disappointed I didn't know that and I am disappointed they did not tell me Schakowsky: And has there been any consequence for them?.. AZAR: So the issue is what would we have done differently of course? SCHAKOWSKY: But you could've stopped the [family separation policy] in some way thought, correct? AZAR: Correct SCHAKOWSKY: Once you found out about this, have you done anything at all, about raising this issue? Azar: What I told our team—I convened our team, because I was seeing the same press stories you were seeing and I was very disturbed by—I want every child to know where their parent is, I want every parent to know where their child is and I want them in regular communication telephone or Skype. SCHAKOWSKY: So tell me, Secretary Azar, as this nation's top healthcare official...did you ever try to just put your foot down and stand up for the children and tell DOJ, DHS, or the White House that family separation should be stopped? AZAR: All that was preempted—the president issues his executive order stopping family separations AZAR: I don't separate children SCHAKOWSKY: What are you doing? American people are horrified by this. They see this, I see this, as state sponsored child abuse, or maybe state sponsored kidnapping...I want to know what you are doing, I want to see a sense of urgency of what you are doing in stopping this? AZAR: I will not stop separate or advocate, for DHS to separate children from individuals who threaten child welfare..." [[House Energy and Commerce Committee, Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Hearing, 3/12/19](#)] *ROUGH TRANSCRIPT

- **Career HHS Official Jonathan White Said That He Encouraged ORR Director Scott Lloyd, ACF Director Steven Wagner And Human Services Counselor Maggie Wynne To Intervene To Stop The Family Separations Policy But Was Told There Would Be No Such Policy.** A federal health official testified Thursday he warned three Trump appointees about the potential health risks of separating migrant children from their parents more than a year before the administration announced the controversial policy. Jonathan White, a career civil servant who helped lead efforts to reunify

thousands of separated families, told a congressional oversight panel he first learned in February 2017 the administration was considering separating migrant families. He said he quickly encouraged the Department of Health and Human Services officials to intervene to stop the policy, but he said they told him the administration would not implement the policy — though it would later be formally announced in May 2018 before being scrapped amid public uproar about six weeks later. ... White, the career HHS official, said he had raised concerns to Scott Lloyd, then-director of the HHS refugee office; Steven Wagner, then-acting assistant secretary for children and families; and counselor Maggie Wynne.” [\[Politico, 2/7/19\]](#)

Alex Azar Doesn't Believe That Requiring Physical And Financial Separation Of Clinics And Limiting Doctor's Abilities To Communicate With Patients Would "Impact" Clinic Operations

Alex Azar Thinks That His Agency's Rule Limiting The Ability Of Doctor's To Discuss Abortion With Patients And Requiring A "Physical And Financial Separation" Between Services Funded By The Government And Organizations That Provides Abortions "Shouldn't Impact The Operations" Of Family Planning Clinics. RUIZ: Can you explain why withholding necessary information from patients from doctors even when specifically requested, even a patient specifically requests what you referrals were—'where can I go if I am considering an abortion?'—etc. is it appropriate under medical ethics? AZAR: So under our final rule we allow, as the statute allows, non-directive-counseling including related to abortion. And the provider is allowed to provide a list of service providers including those that do provide abortions, but they're not allowed to pick up a phone and refer them over. RUIZ: Do you believe this rule will increase access to care for patients under title x? AZAR: I think we actually may see an influx of additional providers willing to come in and be a part of Title X. RUIZ: In terms of access, in terms of a young woman's ability to get their pap smears going to an underserved area where the only providers are those receiving title x funds. 98% of their services are for oral contraceptive services, family planning counseling, and breast exams as well as pap smears etc. for cancer prevention. You think that by defunding them or making it hard for them to function in their clinic when they're the only clinic in that community is going to increase healthcare access for women? AZAR: Not allowing them to through the title X affiliates to support abortions shouldn't be a problem...shouldn't impact their operations Ruiz: But it will..." [\[House Energy and Commerce Committee, Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Hearing, 3/12/19\]](#)
*ROUGH TRANSCRIPT

Alex Azar Is Using Anti-Abortion Talking Points To Defend His Federal Policy Decisions

Alex Azar Also Used An Anti-Abortion Talking Point To Defend His Agency's Title X Gag Rule. RUIZ: What most likely will happen if this is allowed to go forward is these clinics will shut down making breast exams, pap smears, and other critical healthcare services unavailable to those who need it...do you believe that the Title X program has served as a source of critical healthcare program for patients? AZAR: The Title X program is very important, it provides important resources contraceptive and comprehensive family planning, and that's why we fully funded it, but we also want to ensure the fiscal integrity... RUIZ: Why has the administration chosen to move forward with changes to the program? AZAR: By definition in the example you just gave, federal taxpayer money is being used to support the provision of abortions, it's subsidizing that if they wouldn't be allowed to run their business absent Title X money..." [\[House Energy and Commerce Committee, Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Hearing, 3/12/19\]](#) *ROUGH TRANSCRIPT